

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ISLAMA 10088 01 OF 02 211325Z

46

ACTION NEA-12

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R 211207Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2172

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY DACCA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 10088

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJ: PAKISTAN INTERNAL SITUATION

REF: ISLAMABAD 9097 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: OVER PAST TWO YEARS, BHUTTO HAS ATTAINED EFFECTIVE PERSONAL CONTROL OVER MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT AND HAS WEAKENED MOST ELEMENTS IN BODY POLITIC POTENTIALLY COMPETITIVE TO HIS AUTHORITY. BULK OF POPULATION CONTINUES TO APPEAR TO CONSIDER BHUTTO AND TO LESSER EXTENT, HIS PARTY, SYMPATHETIC TO THEIR ASPIRATIONS. RELATIVE CALM NOW PREVAILS ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE ALTHOUGH MANY UNCERTAINTIES REMAIN ABOUT FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 10088 01 OF 02 211325Z

1. TWENTY-THREE MONTHS AFTER HIS ASSUMPTION OF POWER, BHUTTO TODAY PRESIDES OVER CALMEST DOMESTIC SCENE IN SOME YEARS. PRIME MINISTER MAINTAINS FULL CONTROL OVER HIS POLITICAL PARTY, GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES. HE HAS SKILLFULLY PRESERVED MOST OF HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY WITH PAKISTAN'S MASSES. HIS POLITICAL OPPOSITION IS DEMORALIZED, ISOLATED AND FRAGMENTED. KEY PRESSURE GROUPS ARE AT LEAST TEMPORARILY DORMANT. STUDENTS, DESPITE GRIEVANCES AGAINST BHUTTO IN MOST CASES ARE PURSUING THEIR STUDIES. INDUSTRIAL WORKERS SEEM TOLERABLY SATISFIED FOR TIME BEING. ARMED FORCES, ON SURFACE, APPEAR TO HAVE ACCEPTED FULLY BHUTTO'S LEADERSHIP. CIVIL SERVICES AND MIDDLE CLASS, WEAKENED BY PEOPLES' PARTY REFORMS AND HIT BY INFLATION, ARE SCRAMBLING TO PRESERVE THEIR PRIVILEGED POSITIONS ON INDIVIDUEL RATHER THAN CLASS BASIS.

2. SHORT TERM WORRIES FOR BHUTTO PERSIST, NEVERTHELESS. INSURGENCY IN BALUCHISTAN CONTINUES. WALI KHAN AND NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY RETAIN SIZABLE LOYAL FOLLOWING IN SETTLED AREAS OF FRONTIER NEAR PESHAWAR DESPITE STRENUOUS EFFMETS BY BHUTTO TO UNDERMINE WALI'S PRESTIGE AND POLITICAL BASE. PUBLIC DISGRUNTLEMENT IS INCREASING OVER UNPARALLELED INFLATION. BICKERING WITHIN PEOPLES' PARTY OVER SPOILS HAS ESCALATED DURING CABINET-MAKING AND PARTY RESTRUCTURING PROCESSES. DECISION-MAKING APPEARS SPECIAL PRESERVE OF BHUTTO HIMSELF, WITH ONE-MAN GOVERNMENT HAVING DELETERIOUS EFFECT ON EFFICIENCY OF GOP AT UPPER ECHELONS.

3. WHETHER PRESENT POLITICAL LULL IS TEMPORARY PHENOMENON OR PORTENDS LONGER PERIOD OF DOMESTIC STABILITY IS UNCERTAIN. AMONG MANY IMPONDERABLES, FORMOST IS GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY AND PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE. SO FAR, HOWEVER, BHUTTO HAS SUCCESSFULLY NEUTRALIZED MOST POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO HIS GOVERNMENT WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PLACATING AND WEAKENING, TO SOME EXTENT, POTENTIALLY COMPETITIVE MAJOR ELEMENTS IN POWER STRUCTURE.

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 10088 01 OF 02 211325Z

4. BHUTTO HAS KEPT HIS OWN POLITICAL PARTY A LOOSE GROUPING OF COMPETING POLITICIANS AND ECONOMIC VESTED INTERESTS, EACH VYING FOR HIS FAVOR AND GENERALLY LOYAL TO HIS BIDDING. ASIDE FROM FEW PSEUDO-COMMUNISTS AND OTHER INDIVISUALS OF LEFT-WING PERSUASION, THERE HAVE BEEN NO MAJOR DEFECTIONS FROM HIS PARTY IN RECENT MONTHS AND NONE ARE ANTICIPATED IN NEAR FUTURE.

5. ON PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL, PEOPLES' PARTY AND ITS ALLIES HAVE TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND MAJORITIES IN SENATE AND THREE OF FOUR PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES (BALUCHISTAN BEING THE EXCEPTION). ONLY AZAD KASHMIR IS GOVERNED BY PERSONS NOT UNDER BHUTTO'S EFFECTIVE CONTROL ALTHOUGH SITUATION IN BALUCHISTAN --WHERE GOVERNMENT RULES WITHOUT RECOURSE TO ASSEMBLY-- IS EQUIVOCAL. ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL, BHUTTO HAS MOVED TO BRING ELITE CIVIL SERVICES UNDER MORE DIRECT PERSONAL AND PARTY CONTROL BY RETIRING AND FIRING NUMBER OF TOP CIVIL SERVANTS AND BRINGING IN LATERAL ENTRY APPOINTEES TO MANY KEY JOBS.

6. BHUTTO HAS EFFECTIVELY USED BLANDISHMENTS AND COERCION TO WEAKEN HIS POLITICAL OPPOSITION. SOME WELL-KNOWN POLITICAL PERSONALITIES LIKE DAULTANA OF MUSLIM LEAGUE AND HAZARVI OF JUI HAVE JOINED BHUTTO'S CAMP. NAP SEES ITS BALUCHISTAN LEADERSHIP UNDER DETENTION AND MANY LOWER ECHELON LEADERS IN FRONTIER JAILED OR HARASSED. AS BHUTTO NIBBLES AWAY AT ITS BASES OF STRENGTH, HAP HAS EVIDENTLY ABANDONED HOPES TO EXPAND OUTSIDE OF FRONTIER AREAS INTO PUNJAB AND SIND. UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT GROUPING OF 9 OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS CAME CROPPER THROUGH ITS INEPT PURSUIT OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN DURING PERIOD OF FLOODS IN PUNJAB AND SIND, AND MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RECOVER FROM THIS BLUNDER. JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI, WHICH BROKE WITH UDF OVER CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN, SEEMS CONTENT FOR THE PRESENT TO PURSUE ITS OBSCURANTIST ISLAMIC VISIONS. TEHRIQ-I-ISTIQLAL HAS FAILED TO MAKE MUCH HEADWAY IN PAST TWO MONTHS AND ITS LEADER,
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PAGE 04 ISLAMA 10088 01 OF 02 211325Z

LONER ASGHAR KHAN, APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED TO REFRAIN FROM ACTIVE POLITICKING FOR TIME BEING.

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 10088 02 OF 02 211332Z

46

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 10088

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. ONLY IN BALUCHISTAN DOES SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO BHUTTO'S IMMEDIATE POLITICAL CONTROL PERSIST. TOP BALUCH LEADERS REMAIN DEFIANT IN DETENTION (ALTHOUGH NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONTINUING IN ATTEMPT TO SEEK AN ACCOMMODATION). LOW-LEVEL INSURGENCY BY MARRI AND MENGAL TRIBESMEN CONTINUES. WHILE NETTLESOME AND PROBABLY EMBARRASSING TO BHUTTO, INSURGENCY APPEARS CONTAINABLE WITHIN PRESENT GEOGRAPHIC LIMITS AND AT CURRENT LEVEL OF VIOLENCE.

8. BHUTTO'S ASCENDENCY HAS ENTAILED SOME COST IN TERMS OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION. OPPOSITION POLITICIANS HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY SUBJECTED TO ARBITRARY DETENTION AND OTHER FORMS OF HEAVY-HANDED HARRASSMENT. PRESS HAS BEEN SYMSTEMATICALLY COERCED AND IS TODAY MARKEDLY LESS FREE THAN IN BHUTTO'S FIRST CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 10088 02 OF 02 211332Z

YEAR. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED INFO MEDIA ARE PROMOTING BHUTTO PERSONALITY CULT, AT SAME TIME, MOST REPRESSION AND INCIPIENT BRAIN-WASHING AFFECTS RELATIVELY SMALL, POLITICALLY ACTIVE MINORITY. MAN IN STREET PROBABLY FEELS NO MORE COERCED BY AUTHORITY THAN UNDER EARLIER REGIMES, AND IN SOME WAYS PERHAPS LESS SO.

9. BHUTTO HAS ACHIEVED GREATER SUCCESS IN ELIMINATING
OHR REDUCING POTENTIAL CHALLENGES TO HIS AUTHORITY THAN
IN MORE DIFFICULT TASK OF CREATING POLITICAL BASE MORE
SUBSTANTIAL THAN HIS OWN FORMIDABLE PERSONAL SKILLS.
WHILE THERE HAS BEEN CONTINUED EROSION OF HIS
POPULARITY AMONG ARTICULATE, WESTERNIZED SEGMENT OF PAK
SOCIETY, SYMBOLIC GESTURES TO MASSES SUCH AS VAUNTED
BUT IN MANY CASES UNIMPLEMENTED ECONOMIC/SOCIAL REFORMS
CONTINUE TO MEET WITH APPROVAL FROM MOST PAKISTANIS.
SO FAR AS WE CAN ASCERTAIN, BHUTTO, AND TO LESSER EXTENT
HIS PARTY, STILL SEEM TO STAND FOR ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE TO BULK OF POPULACE. (THIS RECORD
MUDDIED SOMEWHAT BY INCREASING CORRUPTION BY PPP
OFFICIALS.) THIS IS NO SMALL ACHIEVEMENT IN TWO YEAR
TIME FRAME. BUT CONSIDERABLY MORE IS GOING TO BE
REQUIRED IN FUTURE. NEITHER BHUTTO NOR ANY OTHER PAKISTANI
LEADER CAN EASILY OR QUICKLY ACHIEVE THE IMMENSELY
DIFFICULT TASK OF SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVING LOT OF BULK
OF POPULATION. UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ARE WHETHER
BHUTTO CAN MAKE ENOUGH PROGRESS IN THIS AREA TO
RETAIN HIS CREDIBILITY WITH MASSES AND WHETHER HE
CAN CREATE OR EVEN ASPIRES TO CREATE INSTITUTIONALIZED
GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM MORE DURABLE THAN ONE-MAN RULE
WHICH HE HAS SO SUCCESSFULLY ATTAINED.
SOBER

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